



Maine Farm Safety Program

Bulletin #2307

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Kids on the Farm: Hazards Outside the Home

On a farm, powerful machinery and tools, chemicals, confined spaces, ponds, animals and motor vehicles on rural roads are some of the potential hazards. Most serious injuries suffered by farm children and adults involve machinery. Because of these hazards, parents need to create “hazard-free” play areas to protect their children. A farm cannot be considered a giant playground. Boundaries and limits need to be set for play areas.

◆ **Hazard-Free Play Area**

Children should have a place to play where they are protected from the daily hazards of farm life. This area should be away from the driveway and buildings. Everyone on the farm should know where this area is and make sure the children use it. The area should be free of broken and unsafe equipment. Make it a place children will enjoy and use. Areas could include a sand box, swingset, backyard or porch.

◆ **Physical Safety**

A child’s physical safety is the most important thing to parents. Flame-resistant clothing protects children if there is a fire. Conspicuous colored clothing and toys will make children visible. Bicycle riders of all ages should wear helmets, and all bicycles should have reflectors. Children riding in vehicles need to be in approved child safety seats or seat belts.

Kids on the Farm: Hazards Outside the Home

- ◆ **Establish a hazard-free play area for small children.**
- ◆ **Lock up chemicals safely.**
- ◆ **Teach children to respect dangerous farm animals.**
- ◆ **Don’t allow children to play on tractors or other farm machinery.**



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◆ **Animal Behavior**

Children love animals, but animals don't always love children. Children need to be taught how to handle and work around animals to lessen potential hazards. Household pets can be as dangerous as farm animals. Respect for all animals should be one of the first things taught to young children.

◆ **Storage Buildings and Barns**

Buildings of any kind pose hazards for children. Be aware of potential hazards in the various buildings on the farm and take measures to lessen them. Lock up chemicals and dispose of containers properly, put ladders out of reach and do not lean heavy objects

against walls. Good housekeeping is the first step in safety.



Test your garage door opener. Use a two-inch thick piece of wood at the bottom and close the door. If the door does not reverse, disengage it and fix or replace the opener as soon as possible.

◆ **Riding and Playing on Equipment**

Safety starts with adults. Children will imitate adult behavior whether it's safe or not. Make sure proper safety procedures become a part of everyday life. Wear seat belts when driving, and fasten small children in approved child safety seats. Wear a helmet when riding an all terrain vehicle (ATV).

Children should not operate machinery until they are completely safety trained. This includes lawn mowers and ATVs. Once trained, make sure children always follow safety rules.

Children are fascinated with big vehicles. Big vehicles can lead to accidents. Do not allow children to ride or play on tractors or other pieces of farm machinery. Adults need to take certain precautions if an unsupervised child plays on equipment. Remove the ignition keys from parked equipment and lock the brakes. Front-end loaders, buckets or other such equipment that might fall should be left in the down position. When parked, self-propelled machinery should be locked and dangerous machinery components should be kept out of reach of children.



◆ **Bicycle Safety**

Teach these bicycle safety rules to children and follow them yourself:

1. Stop before riding out into traffic from a driveway, sidewalk, alley or parking lot. Look left, right and left again. When there is no traffic, enter the roadway.
2. Ride on the right with traffic.
3. Obey all traffic signs, including stop signs and red lights. Kids under 12 should walk, not bike, through busy intersections.
4. Look back and yield to traffic coming from behind before turning left at intersections.

◆ **An All Terrain Vehicle Checklist**

Before taking an ATV (all terrain vehicle) out for a ride or for work, make a preride inspection. This is important because a person can ride farther in an hour than they can walk in a day. Always consult the owner's manual for all the details. Here's a checklist of items to inspect:

- ✓ **Tires and wheels:** Check the air pressure and conditions of the tires. Make sure everything is tight on the wheels.
- ✓ **Controls:** Check the throttle and

other cables. Make sure the brakes work smoothly and be sure the foot shifter is secured and positioned for comfortable operation.

- ✓ **Lights and switches:** Test them to make sure they are working properly.
- ✓ **Oil and fuel:** Check the levels and look for possible leaks. Start out with a full fuel tank.
- ✓ **Chain drive shaft and chassis:** Depending on how the ATV is equipped, maintain the chain or drive shaft according to the owner's manual. Check for loose parts. Make sure the major fasteners are tight.

- ✓ **Always carry a tool kit and a first aid kit for emergencies.**

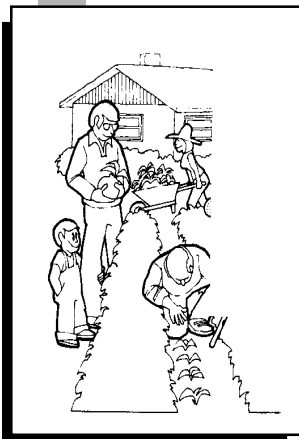
◆ **Plants and Gardening**

Children love to play with plants in the yard. Children need to know outdoor plants may be played with but not eaten. Pick and dispose of mushrooms in the yard. Explain to children they are not the same as those purchased in the grocery store and should never be eaten.

Gardening is often a family activity. Store seeds and bulbs out of reach of children until they are to be

used. When fruits and vegetables are ready to be harvested, pick them with the children. Children may confuse good food with food that is harmful. Always wash fruits and vegetables before eating them, and teach children to do the same.

If there is a suspected plant poisoning, immediately contact a physician or the Maine Poison Control Center at 1-800-442-6305. Get a plant sample. It will aid in diagnosis and treatment.



◆ **Water**

There may be water hazards on the farm. Never leave small children unsupervised in or near water, including ponds, swimming pools and stock watering tanks. Be sure to secure well head covers, dug wells and abandoned wells. Farm ponds and manure pits should be fenced and children taught to stay clear of them.

If possible, it is a good idea for children to take swimming lessons. This does not alleviate the need for supervision, but gives children more confidence around water.

This Maine Farm Safety Fact Sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.



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